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# **News Release**

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## **VA Partnering with States to Help Injured Veterans** ***Nicholson: More Veterans Helped as VA, States Strengthen Cooperation***

WASHINGTON – To help severely injured service members receive benefits from their states when they move from military hospitals to Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) medical facilities in their communities, VA today announced expansion of a collaborative outreach program with states and territories.

After a four-month pilot with the state of Florida, Secretary of Veterans Affairs Jim Nicholson expanded the program to all states while addressing a conference of the National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs in Alexandria, Va.

“This initiative is a promising extension of VA’s own transition assistance for those leaving military service,” said Nicholson. “It is also an opportunity to partner with the states to make long-term support possible for our most deserving veterans throughout the country.”

Called “State Benefits Seamless Transition Program,” the initiative involves VA staff located at 10 Department of Defense medical facilities. They will identify injured military members who will be transferred to VA facilities. VA staff will contact state veterans affairs offices on behalf of the veterans. The state offices, in turn, will contact the veterans to inform them about state benefits for them and dependent family members. Most states and territories offer a range of benefits to veterans.

“Connecting veterans with state benefits immediately upon their separation from military service is a challenge, and more so for those who have suffered serious injury,” said John M. Garcia, president of the National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs (NASDVA). “The State Benefits Seamless Transition Program opens a good line of communication and coordination between the Department of Defense, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and the state departments of veterans’ affairs.”

**- More -**

## **State Initiative 2/2/2/2**

NASDVA is an organization consisting of the top veterans affairs official in each state and territory. The association is a nexus for the exchange of information among the states, Congress, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and the veteran service organizations.

Nicholson said this state-federal initiative will maintain an injured veteran's privacy and provide early access to additional benefits. The new national partnership between VA and the states is the result of a pilot project with the Florida State Department of Veterans' Affairs, which began in September 2006.

"I applaud VA for expanding nationwide this worthwhile pilot program for our severely injured servicemembers," said LeRoy Collins Jr., executive director of the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs. "This new initiative will be of great value to state governments enhancing long-term support to their veterans and families."

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